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CAIRO

MYSTERY ENGLISHMAN NAMED IN "SPY" TRIAL

WHO IS MR. WARDEN?
From Our Own Correspondent

CAIRO:

October 13 was an unlucky day for Rashid Rizk, Fouad Moharram, and Samy Nafeh. Originally, the Supreme Court for State Security had set this day for the final verdicts and sentences in the trials of eighteen Egyptians and foreigners accused of spying on behalf of Israel.

But when, as the photographers' flash bulbs lit up the austere hall, and Court President Babbassaouti had asked whether all the accused were present and they stood to hear their fate, it was communicated only partially and in back-handed fashion.

The dossiers of Rizk, Moharram and Nafeh had been referred to the Mufti of Egypt for his advice and a final verdict would be given on October 25. This could mean but one thing: the death penalties had been decreed for the three and only a highly unusual remission by the Mufti could save them.

HEADQUARTERS IN SWITZERLAND: From the beginning the cases of Rizk, Moharram and Nafeh had been presented by the public prosecutor as the most serious. The main points of the charges against them, as those against the foreign defendants, Coys and Goodwaard, and against the other Egyptians; notably Ibrahim Rashid, had been that they transmitted confidential political, economic and military information to a certain Hermann Brann, formerly president of the American and Foreign Bank of Tangier, now in Geneva, and to a mysterious foreigner, presumably an Englishman known only as "Warden."

According to the testimony, Warden had claimed in 1958 to be interested in Egyptian airlines, land reclamation, and other projects in the U. A. R. He had made Switzerland his chief headquarters but actually, charged the prosecution, Brann and Warden were leading Israeli agents.

Of all the cases, that of Ibrahim Rashid, a 50-year-old lawyer and the last defendant to be tried, had provided some of the best copy for the U. A. R. press in months. His defense had taken some days of painstaking and very involved argument.

LEADER OF MODERATE NATIONALISM: One of his counsels, Mohammed Ali Rushdy, had pointed out that Rashid began his career in politics under promising stars making a name for himself as a leader of moderate nationalism during the Wafdist era.

In his arguments Rushdy asked how a wealthy man whose wife owned 385 feddans of land, of which she had retained 200 following the agrarian reform, and dispensed with 100 feddans to enable her husband to square accounts with a Jewish company director who sold counterfeit stocks; how could such a man commit espionage for gain?

Ibrahim Rashid had been obliged to withdraw the counterfeit stock from circulation on payment of EF20,000 representing proceeds of the sale of 100 feddans given up by Rashid's wife. According to Rushdy, the sum of EF2.412 which Rashid was accused of accepting as a gift was actually commission payable to him at the rate of one per cent for funds deposited to the credit of Ali Kahn at Brann's Banque des Depots in Geneva.

QUITE IN ORDER: And contacts which Rashid had had with Warden in 1959 had nothing to do with money deposited in his account in 1957. Warden's inquiries concerning the stability of the Egypt-Syria coalition after the February 1958 merger, and about U.A.R.-Soviet relations, seemed to Rashid quite in order for a man who wanted to invest "millions of pounds" in the country.

And the defendant had advised Warden--said his attorney--that since the American Sixth Fleet was in Lebanese waters and British troops were in Jordan (this was in 1958) things were tense in the entire Middle East. Thus, it was hardly a good time to invest. But, claimed Rushdy, Rashid had refused to supply military information about Syria.

"Defendant Ibrahim Rashid" had no reason to doubt Warden's intentions since the latter had accepted a number of genuine offers to purchase waste land and establish commercial firms. All this made the accused feel at ease in his own mind about Warden said Rushdy.

THE BIG QUESTION: Only when Rashid went to Geneva in a vain attempt to locate Brann was he coerced by Warden through threats to himself and his family into filling out a questionnaire revealing data on specific persons in the U. A. R., according to the defense.

Another defense attorney, Dr. Mohammed Abdullah, had claimed that Rashid's bank account--like that of some of the other defendants--had been credited with large sums without his knowledge by Brann and Warden. But Rashid had agreed to their demands argued Dr. Abdullah, simply to dupe them. When Warden discovered this, he threatened Rashid with serious harm.

But, as Cairo awaited October 25 and the final sentences, the one big question which the trial had raised was still to be cleared up publicly: who is Mr. Warden? According to both the defense and the prosecution, Warden had offered to finance establishment of an internal airline.

REVOLUTION TO COME? The theory that he had something to do with one of the aircraft companies established in Geneva, a theory making the rounds of those Cairo cafes where such matters are discussed, was supported by a number of points of the testimony, and perhaps the court or the government were saving this revelation for the last minute in order to secure the maximum impact on public opinion.